# The Journal of a Neglected Wife

By MABEL HERBERT URNER



## CHAPTER VII (Concl'd).

October 23d.

TONIGHT I took out my marriage certificate and read it over and over. His name and mine—"Horace E. Kennedy and Mary R. Craig are this day united in holy matrimony * * *" How little that means now! And yet it is all that I have left—that bit of paper is all that now makes me his wife.

No! no! I do not mean that—I do not believe that! It is merely that paper—it is these fifteen years of our life together that holds him now. For I know if there had been no ceremony—had I lived with him all these years without this certificate—he would still feel the same sense of duty, of obligation, to me that he feels now. He can never forget that I have given him the fifteen best years of my life. A year ago I could have loathed myself for always thinking of that claim, but now I cannot help it. I hug the thought to my heart. I have given him my youth. I have given the best of my life. No other woman's claim can be as strong as that.

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October 24th.

IN a magazine today, I came across a page of well-known people—actors, artists, writers—picturing them as they look now, and as they will look when they are eighty! In each face the artist has cleverly kept the likeness of feature and expression, but distorted it with the wrinkled, shriveled aspect of gaunt old age. It was a ghastly idea, but the magazines now exploit any idea if it be only striking.

Always any thought of age I apply to myself. Somehow I have never thought of Horace as ever growing old—in some vague way I have felt that he would always remain the same. But now for the first time I pictured him as old—old! How would he look at eighty? What would be like? At forty-six he is a strikingly handsome, vigorous, virile man. But what cruel changes will thirty-four years make?

I remember once sitting in the Senate gallery at Washington, and looking down at a very old member, a man who had long been before the public, but who was now in his dotage. He sat there, a pathetic, decrepit figure, leaning tremblingly on his cane, his mouth half open. I was told that age had weakened the muscles of his mouth, and that he habitually held it that way. I remember my feeling of repulsion and pity at the idotic expression it gave his face. And when later he arose to speak, his voice was painfully shrill and wheezy.

Will Horace ever be like that—Horace, with his virile strength and his rich, full voice? Oh, no—no—I cannot bear that thought! If only I could throw my arms around him and shield him with my love from a change so merciless.

## CHAPTER VIII.

COLONEL and Mrs. Crompton, from Washington, are stopping at the Savoy. Last year when Horace had the Stensons' case in the Supreme Court, and was in Washington so often, several times I went with him, and Mrs. Crompton entertained us a dinner, both at her home and at the Willard. This is the first opportunity we have had to return their hospitality, and now I must have them here at least once. But, oh, how I dread it! I shrink so from the thought of trying to entertain now—to give a dinner—to make a pretense at gayety when my heart is breaking! But if it must be done I am anxious to have it over, so I have invited them for Tuesday. I feel that it might be easier to have some one else, so I have asked Mr. and Mrs. Duffield.

I talked with Horace about it this morning, and he has promised to come home early Tuesday and help receive them. I am going to engage a caterer to prepare and serve the dinner. I haven't the heart to look after it myself, and Mary could not do it alone. Oh, how difficult everything seems now—how everything weighs upon me. Always before I have taken such keen pleasure in planning and arranging a dinner at home. But now—what does my home mean to me now?

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October 27th.

HORACE misunderstood me; he thought the dinner was for Thursday, not Tuesday. When I asked him this morning to be sure not to forget to come home early, so that he would have time to dress before they came, he looked up startled. "Why, it isn't tonight?. You said Thursday." As I had not even considered Thursday, I don't see how he could have made the mistake. He seemed much worried, said he was not sure that he could come early this evening. I almost cried in my anxiety. I said that he must—that I couldn't receive those people alone. All I could make him say was: "I will try to come. I misunderstood the day, and I have made other arrangements, but I will come if I can."

"But if you can't come early, you will at least come in time for dinner?" I persisted excitedly.

"I will if I can, Mary, I told you that."

It took all my self-control to keep from crying out—from demanding why he could not come—from letting go all the accusations and denunciations I have held back for so long.

When he had gone I threw myself on the couch, weak and trembling with the effort of self-restraint. But I knew I must not give way—I must keep up for tonight. It is too late to stop the dinner now, and before those guests I must be smiling and self-contained. They must not know—they must not see. . . . If he does not come I must be prepared to make excuses—easy, graceful excuses!

Midnight

The dinner is over—and he did not come. He has not come yet. At eight—just as we were going into the dining-room—he telephoned. Said he was very sorry, but that it would be impossible for him to get here. And then he said good-by and rang off, before I had time to ask any questions or make any protest. I do not even know where he was when he telephoned. After that I went through the dinner as best I could, but I feel that it was a failure—a pitiful failure. In spite of my attempted gayety and my carefully careless excuses for Horace, I know they felt something was wrong. There was a forced, constrained atmosphere through the whole evening. And what hurt me most was their attempts to help—their pretense that they did not see. I presume I ought to be grateful, but it is hard to be pitied. They left early; for that I was grateful.

I am writing this hoping it will calm me—that the mere effort of writing will take away some of this feverish bitterness. For I am afraid—afraid that when he comes I shall lose all my self-control, and that at last I shall speak—cry out all that I have been silent about for so long. For I know that he is with her—nothing else would have kept him away. It is for her that he let me go through this alone.

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November 1st.

I HAVE spoken. Am I glad or sorry? Has it made things better or worse? I don't know. I don't know. I still feel dazed.

It all happened that night—Tuesday night. I haven't written since—I couldn't. It was half-past one when he came home. I heard him go straight to his room. My door was open, the light shining out in the hall, and yet he made no effort to come in, to make any explanation. He went direct to his room. If he had only come to my door and made even a pretext at an excuse, I think I would not have spoken. But his quiet ignoring of it all maddened me beyond endurance. The strain of the dinner, the long, feverish wait for him—it had all gone to make me desperate. And now, with a feeling of utter recklessness—a recklessness such as I have never known before—I went to his room and knocked. The door opened; he stood there inquiringly.

"Why did you not come?"

"It was impossible." His eyes were coldly quiet.

"Why?"

"I told you, Mary, that it was impossible."

"Why?" My lips and throat were dry.

"Listen, Mary; I am sorry you had to entertain at this dinner alone. I regret it very much. I told you that over the 'phone. I would have come if I could, but I could not. Now, I think you had better let the matter rest there."

"Where were you?"

He did not answer.

"Where were you? You must tell me where you were tonight!"

Still no answer.

"Do you mean that you won't answer me—that you won't even tell me where you have been?" I was frightened. I knew I should stop—that I was going too far—that I would only suffer more for this. But I knew, too, that I could not stop now—I knew I would go on and on. * * *

"Then you refuse to tell me where you have been?"

"I must refuse, Mary, to be catechized in this way. Will you let me say good-night now?" He came toward the door as though to close it. That movement broke the last of my self-control.

"Then I will tell you where you have been. You were with another woman—the woman for whom you have neglected me for over a year! And you thought I didn't know—didn't know you were in the toils of some woman—a bad, shameless woman—a common——"

"Mary!" He took a step toward me, his hands clenched, his face ghastly pale.

"Oh, I know you could kill me for saying that. I only wish you would! Don't you think I would welcome death instead of this life I've been living for months? But it shall not go on. You will promise me now that you will never see her again, or I will end it all tonight! Will you promise me that—will you? Will you promise never to see that * * *"

There was something in his face—something that * * *

"Then go to her—live with her—marry her if you will! I will never trouble you again.

A great red wave seemed before my eyes as I rushed down the hall into the bath-room and locked the door. The bottles—the bottles on the medicine shelf! Glycerine, toilet water, bay rum—in a frenzied glance my eyes swept the labels. Was there nothing—nothing that would give oblivion—that would end it all forever?"

The door was being fiercely shaken. "Open this door, Mary!" his voice came hoarsely from the outside. "Open it, or I will break it down!"

I must find something quick—quick—before he wrenched the door from its hinges. I knocked some bottles from the shelf as I frantically thrust them aside to get to those behind. Camphor, witch-hazel, glycerine—oh, was there nothing—nothing? Then back of them all shone the label "Laudanum—Poison!"

And then—my trembling fingers broke the cork. Half of it remained tight in the neck of the bottle. He was throwing his whole weight upon the door now—in a moment it would come down. I tore the scarfpin from my dress—it bent in the cork. Then I caught up a tooth-brush and thrust the handle against the cork—it yielded. Another thrust pushed it down in the bottle!

I raised it to my lips. * * *. A deafening crash. Glass fell shattering all around me. I stood paralyzed. Through the empty door-frame, from which he had shivered the heavy ground glass, Horace's white face and dark gleaming eyes were fixed upon me. Another second and he had reached through a bloodstained hand, unlocked the door, threw it open, jerked the bottle from me and hurled it to the floor. I heard it break and smelled the pungent odor of laudanum.

Then he half led, half carried me to the couch in my room. The blood from his cut hand had dripped down the front of my dress, and there was a large red stain on the lace of my sleeve. I gazed at it dully. At the moment I think I was incapable of any feeling. I heard him go back into the bath room. He returned with a towel wrapped around his hand. Neither of us had spoken. I was trembling, quivering all over. Not crying—I could not cry. He sat down beside the couch and laid his hand on my shoulder, as though to quiet me.

I closed my eyes, and slowly there stole over me a strange sense of quiet—of peace, like the calm of some strong narcotic. I know now the sensation Helen Chandler spoke of—the exhaustion that sometimes comes after a fierce passion has wrecked itself.

I don't know how long he stayed beside me, or how long it was before I slept. When I awoke it was dawn. A blanket had been laid over me, and I was alone. From under his door shone a strip of bright light—he was still awake.

No reference to that night has been made between us since. Only a bandaged hand and a bloodstained dress (carefully hid away) bear testimony to that night.

The next morning I forced myself to go down to breakfast. He was very pale, and his hand was thickly bandaged; but he said "Good morning" quietly, as though nothing had happened. During the day a glazier called to fix the bathroom door; evidently he had telephoned for one from his office. He made no mention of it to me. That night, when he came home to dinner, I saw that his hand had been dressed and skillfully bandaged. He had been to a surgeon, then. Was the cut deep? Could it be anything serious? But I dared not ask him. I can see that he has it bandaged fresh every day. Does it pain him? My heart aches with pity and anxiety; but I can say nothing.

November 3d.

"The relations of men and women can never remain stationary. They must either go forward or backward; there is no resting place, no height that can be permanently held."

Is that true, or was it written, as such things usually are, only for literary effect?

His love for her—has it yet reached the heights, that it must soon recede?

To what self-abnegation have I been subdued that I could write that last sentence—to imply that I was willing to wait for his love of her to wane that he might come back to me!

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November 4th.

I REMEMBER long ago saying to Horace that I had no special talent. Art, music, literature, languages—I had a superficial aptitude for them all, but a real talent for none.

And he answered tenderly: "Sweetheart, you have the greatest of all talents—a wonderful talent for loving."

"A talent for loving!" Yes, I have had that, and the saddest part of all is that I have it still. "A talent for loving!" And I am a faded wife of forty-five, whose husband loves another woman. "A talent for loving!" Horace, it is breaking my heart. Why did it not die within me when it ceased to give you pleasure?

**The Continuation of This Story Will Be Found in Tomorrow's Issue of This Paper.**

### THOUSANDS SEE BAPTISM.

ALLENTOWN, Pa., April 19.—The Mennonites held a public baptism in the Little Lehigh, in the presence of several thousand people. Seven were baptized, three women, two men, and two little boys.